

Message Text

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SUBJECT: DATA ON SPEED LIMIT/HIGHWAY FATALITIES

REF: STATE 204522

1. IN AUSTRIA, DECREASE IN ANNUAL NUMBER OF TRAFFIC DEATHS HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH IMPOSITION OF LOWER HIGHWAY SPEED LIMITS LATE IN 1973, BUT OTHER FACTORS ALSO APPEAR TO HAVE HAD A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN REDUCING THE CARNAGE ON THE NATION'S ROADS. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS KILLED DROPPED FROM 2,469 IN 1973 (6.2 PERCENT LOWER THAN IN 1972) TO 2,231 IN 1974 (9.6 PERCENT LOWER) AND TO 2,203 IN 1975 (1.3 PERCENT LOWER).

FOR THE FIRST SEVEN MONTHS OF 1976 TRAFFIC DEATHS TOTALED 970 PERSONS

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WHICH IS 209 OR NEARLY 18 PERCENT BELOW THE FIGURE OF THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

2. FOLLOWING IS DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF HIGHWAY DEATHS IN 1974 AND 1975:

CLASS OF ROAD	1974	1975	CHANGE IN PERCENT
FEDERAL HIGHWAYS	1,109	1,036	MINUS 6.6
MOTORWAYS	55	76	PLUS 40.0
PROVINCIAL HIGHWAYS	567	573	PLUS 1.0
OTHER ROADS	500	516	PLUS 3.6
TOTAL	2,231	2,203	MINUS 1.3

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3. REDUCTIONS IN 1974 AND 1975 ARE ASCRIBED IN LARGE PART TO

INTRODUCTION OF GENERAL SPEED LIMITS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF FUEL CRISIS (DEC 1, 1973 - 100 KM/H WHOLE ROAD SYSTEM; MARCH 1974 - 100 KM/H FOR FEDERAL HIGHWAYS AND 120 KM/H FOR SUPER HIGHWAYS; APRIL 1974 - INCREASE OF SPEED LIMIT OF 130 KM/H FOR SUPER HIGHWAYS.) ABOVE DATA FOR 1974 AND 1975 SHOW THAT OVERALL DECREASE IN TRAFFIC DEATHS ACCOMPANIED BY SHARP INCREASE IN DEATHS ON SUPERHIGHWAYS FOR WHICH SPEED LIMITS WERE RAISED TWICE DURING 1974. TREND TO MORE ACCIDENTS AND MORE RESULTANT INJURIES ON SUPERHIGHWAYS HAS CONTINUED THIS YEAR ALTHOUGH NUMBER OF FATALITIES ON LIMITED ACCESS HIGHWAYS HAS NOT INCREASED.

4. OFFICIALS BELIEVE EFFECTIVENESS OF SPEED LIMITS BY THEMSELVES IN REDUCING TRAFFIC DEATHS HA DIMINISHED SOMEWHAT OVER TIME. SHARP DROP OF HIGHWAY FATALITIES THUS FAR IN 1976 IS THUS ATTRIBUTED PRIMARILY TO A CONBINATION OF OTHER FACTORS INCLUDING: LESS TRAFFIC ON THE HIGHWAY SYSTEM AS A WHOLE (ALTHOUGH SUPERHIGHWAY TRAFFIC HAS CONTINUED TO CLIMB), INCREASED USE OF SEAT BELTS, STEPPED-UP POLICE TRAFFIC SURVEILLANCE, AND AN INTENSIFIED HIGHWAY SAFETY CAMPAIGN. THESE FACTORS, HOWEVER, ALL WORK IN COMPLEMENTARY FASHION WITH LOWER SPEED LIMITS.

5. COMPREHENSIVE STATISTICAL DATA PREPARED BY AUSTRIAN CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE AND STUDY BY AUSTRIAN ROAD SAFETY BOARD ON "PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF GENERAL SPEED LIMITS" FORWARDED UNDER SEPARATE COVER.MEEHAN

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